

**Civic Education in Marion County
A Report Prepared for Richard M. Fairbanks
Foundation**

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Background

Introduction

In 1915, the U.S. Commissioner of Education selected Indianapolis' elementary schools as a case study in civic education. The city was hailed for its integrated approach to civics and was selected because "for several years the public schools of Indianapolis have had a reputation for unusually good work in this direction." Notably, the study goes on to say that "the civic aspect of education permeates the entire work of the elementary schools in this city . . . " even diffusing into elementary arithmetic.

For Indianapolis' public elementary schools in the early 1900s, civics was paramount to educating for life. Indeed the definition of civics used by the city's public schools remains instructive for today: "Civics is training in habits of good citizenship, rather than merely a study of government forms and machinery." In particular Indianapolis viewed civic education as existing:

- To help the child realize that he is a responsible and helpful member of several social groups.
- To awaken and stimulate motives that will lead to the establishment of habits of order, cleanliness, cheerful cooperation, sympathetic service, and obedience to law
- To emphasize the intimate and reciprocal relation between the welfare of the individual and the welfare of the home and society.
- To develop political intelligence and to prepare the young citizen for its exercise.

The efforts of Indianapolis in the early 20th century worked to instill what Alexis de Tocqueville called the habits of the heart. Observing America merely a half century earlier, the French philosopher called these habits central to the ethos that he believed made American democracy function.

Fast-forward 100 years and the prevailing conditions in education standards and American culture have changed the education landscape significantly. Nevertheless, schools in Indiana and nationwide continue to bear the responsibility of educating children for life as American citizens. In the words of former U.S. Representative from Indiana, Lee Hamilton, "Democracy is hard work. Each new generation of Americans must learn that the freedoms we enjoy carry with them certain obligations — to be informed about issues, to listen to opposing views, to work in a civil manner to resolve the conflicts that inevitably arise in a nation as large and diverse as ours."¹

¹ Lee Hamilton and Randall T. Shepard, "Civic Education Vital for Democracy," (September 17, 2010) URL: <http://www.centeroncongress.org/civic-education-vital-democracy>

From the inception of the tax supported public school system in the United States, one of the most important functions has been to give the instruction and training necessary for the intelligent performance of the duties of citizenship. Indeed, the work of preparation for citizenship has been and still is one of the strongest arguments for making education a function of the State.

PP Claxton, Commissioner
US Dept of the Interior - 1915



Defining Civics

“The bet of a democracy is that we can govern ourselves,” explained Martha Minow, Dean of Harvard Law School, at the onset of a civic education conference. “The risk is that we will not prepare or engage enough to do so.” Each generation of democracy places its bets on the following one, requiring a transmission of knowledge, values and practices that ensure power ultimately lies in the hands of the citizenry. In this way, civics is an education in self-government and demands active participation by individuals in the affairs of public life. The responsibility of this critical transference lay largely in the hands of schools, especially public institutions.

In its entirety, civic education is comprised of civic knowledge, civic skills and civic dispositions according to the U.S. Department of Education. Civic knowledge revolves around five essential questions:

- What are civic life, politics and government?
- What are the foundations of the American political system?
- How does the government established by the constitution embody the purposes, values and principles of American democracy?
- What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
- What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

Civic skills are concerned with the ability to think and respond to democratic life. This may involve analysis, explanation, civil conversation, and negotiating and conflict management. Finally, civic dispositions comprise the character and embraced responsibilities of citizenship.²

² The Civics Framework for the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Department of Education.

The Problem

Today civic education tends to barely meet the standards of offering coursework in U.S. government and U.S. history—which are certainly important—but disregards the higher “habits of the heart” that de Tocqueville spoke of. Of course, this diluted understanding of civic education has been 50 years in the making. Since the 1960s and stretching back nearly 100 years prior, American schools required multiple courses in civics and government.³ At present, according to a study by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, only 21 states required a state-designed social studies test.⁴ As a *Huffington Post* article covering the study says, “Only nine states require students to pass a social studies test to graduate from high school.” *Not* including Indiana. The article goes on: “Although 39 states require at least one course in American government or civics, only eight states administer statewide, standardized tests specifically in civics/American government.”⁵ Including Indiana.

The outcome of this inattention is troubling. The Nation’s Report Card in Civics, a report by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), suggests that after grade four students make little to no progress in civics. In fact, the scores for twelfth-graders declined between 2006 and 2010. Unfortunately there is little additional room for the subject in America today due to a combination of outdated materials, information age prioritization of math and science as well as accompanying accountability standards that give low priority to civics. Marion County schools are symptomatic of this national problem and yet contain notable exceptions.

ISTEP and Social Studies in Marion County

At a macro level, the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) provides a glimpse into the state of civic education in Marion County. In 5th and 7th grades, ISTEP measures students’ social studies competencies, including civics. The National Council for Social Studies defines social studies as “the content knowledge, intellectual skills, and civic values necessary for fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a participatory democracy.” With this in mind, ISTEP can provide a composite measure of civic education in Marion County.

According to 2012 ISTEP results, Marion County students had a 60% pass rate for social studies which lags behind the 69% state average. This is a slight improvement over 2011 yet nearly 4 out of 10 students do not have a basic understanding of social studies, which includes civics.⁶

³ “The New Civics” *The Progress of Education Reform* (2013)

⁴ “State Civic Education Requirements,” Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2012).

⁵ “Civics Education Testing Only Required In 9 States for High School Graduation: CIRCLE Study,” *Huffington Post* (2012) URL: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/12/circle-study-finds-most-s_n_1959522.html

⁶ Statistics compiled from the College Success Coalition’s Achievement Data Report for Marion County. URL: <http://cgi.asainstitute.org/cgi-bin/csc/achievementreport?schoolid=county-49>

Indiana Graduation Requirements

Core 40 – 6 Social Studies credits; 2 U.S. History; 2 U.S. Government; 1 Economics; and 2 World History or Geography

General Diploma – 2 U.S. History; 1 Government; and 1 other Social Studies

All public and charter schools must meet these requirements; private schools follow suit because of accreditation rules and college / course transfer standards

Indiana has “End of Course Requirements” for English, Math and Science but NOT in Social Studies; implications are clear for teacher prioritization.

Survey Results

To gain a better understanding of civics at the school and classroom level, we sent a survey to 300 Marion County school administrators requesting their (and their faculty members’) participation. Thirty individuals or 10% of our sample completed the survey.⁷ The responses came from administrators, high school teachers and elementary school teachers. While the overall numbers are low (likely due to summer vacation followed by the busyness associated with the start of school), responses were received by all school types: public schools, private schools, parochial schools, and charter schools. The results therefore combine to offer valuable insights at the administrative and classroom levels as well as across school types.

Type of School:	Number of Respondents:	Role:	Number of Respondents:
Public Schools	14	Administrator	9
Private Schools	5	High School Teacher	11
Charter Schools	2	Elementary Teacher	9
Parochial Schools	9	*Did not indicate	1

⁷ The survey was sent to just over 300 administrators asking them to complete the survey themselves and to pass it along to their teaching staff and encourage them to take it. The survey was open for two weeks and one reminder was sent. Thirty people completed the survey. We believe the timing of the request/project is one of the prime reasons for the low participation rate for both the survey and the requests for interviews. The vast majority of administrators and teachers were not responding to emails during the month of July. During August requests were resent, but many respondents were unable to participate due to the rush of the new school year.

We categorized survey questions into five key areas to help gauge the state of civic education in Marion County: Attitude, School Culture, Outcomes, Instructional Methods, and Improvements. Each of these focus areas is highlighted following a description of the themes that emerged from the survey.

Survey Highlights

- 100% of respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that teaching civic education makes a difference for students’ personal development.
- 80% of respondents “Strongly Agreed” that teaching civic education at school matters a great deal for our country.
- 73% of respondents “Agreed” with the statement that in their school students learn to help solve problems in the community.
- 27% of respondents “Disagreed” with the statement that in their school students learn to be patriotic and committed citizens of their country.
- 23% of respondents “Disagreed” with the statement that in their school students learn to be concerned about what happens in other country. 67% “Agreed” and only 10% “Strongly Agreed”.
- 87% of respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that students learn how to defend their opinion with civil discourse.
- 60% either “Very often” or “Often” have students interact with primary source documents.
- 70% either “Often” or “Very Often” connect lessons to issues that are relevant to students’ lives.

Attitude

The survey indicated quite conclusively that respondents felt that civic education was important to students’ personal development and to the health of our country. 100% of respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that teaching civic education makes a difference for students’ personal development. 80% of respondents “Strongly Agreed” that teaching civic education at school matters a great deal for our country.

There were many respondents who expounded by providing comments. For instance, one respondent explained, “[civic education] is what prepares students to take part in our representative democracy. We ignore it at grave risk to society, and we are already seeing the results in social breakdown.” Another said in reference to civic education that, “it must be considered one of the most important values in our society for our republic to sustain itself.”

Predictably, there was an overwhelming sense from the survey data that teachers agreed that civic education was important (these were social studies teachers, after all). One teacher commented, “public schools are the great equalizer as we have many, MANY immigrant children in our school. One-third of our school students have English as their second language. Our teachers pass on to our students much information about our country and government and our society as the students transition and become part of the fabric of our community; I’d say the teaching of civics is extremely important.”

Notably, public school teachers felt that their district was paying attention to civic education. In fact, 77% of public school teachers “Disagreed” with the statement that authorities in their district pay little attention to civic education. It is clear from the survey that district leadership also considers civic education important and communicates that with staff.

School Culture

For 70% of respondents, their schools and communities provide ample opportunities for students to be involved in civic education. Typical activities identified included volunteering, Key Club, debate club, and service learning among other activities.

Additionally, we asked respondents to consider where most of the emphasis on civic education is placed as well as where they felt the most emphasis should be placed. Respondents said that most of the emphasis in their school is *and* should be placed on student character and citizenship development. They said that the secondary area of emphasis is knowledge about the history of the United States; however, they said that secondary emphasis *should* be student participation in community and political activities.

When I consider civic education in my school, I believe the most emphasis is placed on:

Student character and citizenship development	16
Knowledge about the history of the United States	15
Knowledge about the workings of the US government	10
Student participation in community and political activities	6
Student independent (critical) thinking	1

When I consider civic education in my school I believe the most emphasis should be placed on:

Student character and citizenship development	20
Student participation in community and political activities	12
Knowledge about the history of the United States	10
Knowledge about the workings of the US government	10
Student independent (critical) thinking	3

Observed Outcomes

To better understand the outcomes related to current civic education methods and practices in the county, we asked survey respondents questions regarding what civic knowledge and practices they have observed, in general, in their students. In other words, respondents were asked to provide their opinion about what students learn pertaining to civics. Inspired by a position paper produced by the Communitarian Network on the role of civic education, we developed these questions in the hope of gaining insights into learning outcomes in schools and classrooms. (For more background, see: http://www.civiced.org/papers/articles_role.html)

Respondents agreed with the statement that in their school students learn to help solve problems in the community. And 87% of respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that students learn how to defend their own opinion with civil discourse. Of note, 27% of respondents “Disagreed” with the statement that in their schools students learn to be patriotic and committed citizens of their country; this is a troubling figure since citizenship and patriotism are paramount to civic education and student development.

Another theme that surfaced in the survey was the importance of learning about and understanding what is happening in other countries. 77% of public school respondents and 100% of private school respondents “Agreed” that students in their school learn to be concerned about what happens in other countries. Based on comments given in the survey, teachers felt that this sense of global awareness was very much a part of civic education, one teacher said that; “[It] helps kids realize that we are not the only ‘culture’ and learn about the wonders and lives of those from other or different cultures—it builds tolerance.”

Instructional Methods

Within the classroom, teachers impart civics through a variety of methods. For example, 60% of respondents “Very Often / Often” have students interact with primary source documents and 70% “Very Often / Often” connect lessons to issues that are relevant to students’ lives. Over half said they “Sometimes or Never” have students participate in events or activities in the community, which may be a function of the limited opportunities for civics-related extracurricular activities. Nearly half of respondents said that they “sometimes or never” have students participate in role-playing or simulations (i.e. mock elections, debate or court case reenactment, etc.)

Desired Improvements

A majority of the responses regarding desired improvements in civic education suggest high teacher commitment to educational goals rather than simple process change. Expanded opportunities for service learning along with the expressed desire for professional development suggests that educators are less concerned with resource availability or curriculum quality than they are with inculcating civic values in their students. In this light, school corporations may consider continuing to further invest in honing their teachers' skills while encouraging experimentation in (and outside) the classroom. Furthermore, the desire for more service learning is an opportunity for other community institutions—from churches to corporations—to engage students in volunteerism and community events. Establishing partnerships between schools and

community-based firms/organizations would not only improve prospects for civic participation but could strengthen the bonds of the community at large.

More opportunities for service learning	13
Additional training in subject matter knowledge	13
More instructional time allocated to civic education	12
Additional training in teaching methods:	12
More cooperation between teachers in different subject areas or grade levels	11
More opportunities for special projects	11
More emphasis on civic topics in standardized assessment	6
Better materials and textbooks	4
More materials and textbooks	2

Comparing Types of Schools

The survey brought to light some interesting comparisons between types of schools, mostly between public and parochial schools. The number of charter school and private school respondents was not significant enough to draw comparisons.

- 77% of public school teachers “Disagree” with the statement that authorities in their district pay little attention to civic education.
- 100% of public school respondents “Agreed” with the fact that in their school students learn to make collaborative decisions.
- 100% of public school respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed” that in their schools students learn how to act to protect the environment.
- 38% of public school respondents say that their students “Never” get to participate in events or activities in the community (service learning).
- 62% of public school respondents say that they “Very Often” or “Often” connect lessons to issues that are relevant to students’ lives.
- Public school teachers feel that the best thing to improve Civic Education is to allocate more instructional time to it (7 out of 13 mentioned it along with other items).
- 100% of private school respondents “Agreed” that students in their school learn to be concerned about what happens in other countries compared to 77% of public school respondents.
- 40% of parochial school respondents either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” that students learn how to act to protect the environment. 100% of public school respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that students learn how to act to

protect the environment.

- 100% of parochial school respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed” that students learn how to defend their opinion with civil discourse compared to 70% of public school respondents.
- 57% of parochial school respondents either “Very Often” or “Often” utilize lectures to present the subject to students compared to just 7% of public school respondents.
- 71% of parochial school respondents either “Sometimes” or “Never” have their students participate in events or activities in the community (service learning) compared to 54% of public school respondents.
- 86% of parochial school respondents either “Very often” or “Often” connect lessons to issues that are relevant to students’ lives compared to 62% of public school respondents.

Interviews

In addition to the survey, we interviewed five teachers, one administrator and one Indiana Public School (IPS) district Social Studies Facilitator.⁸ We also completed three additional interviews with national civic education exemplar teachers who live in Indiana but outside of Marion County and who could provide valuable insight into best practices.

The results from the interviews mirrored that of the survey. All of the teachers we spoke with believe that civic instruction is important and needs to be improved (See Appendix II). Gilder Lehman award-winning teacher, Tom Haywood said, “I believe that school-wide civics initiatives that get students involved in the application of civics standards in a ‘real world’ way is our only hope in directly enhancing civic education.”

Displaying a disproportionate interest in the things that interest their students, five out of the ten interviewees mentioned relevancy as an important factor in their favorite civics unit. Four out of the ten interviewees described their favorite unit as being one in which the students were actively engaged in a simulation.

Common instructional methods cited from teacher interviews

- Active & Experiential (living history, simulations, mock trials, mock Continental Congress, mock Supreme Court cases, bill becomes a law simulation, Model UN, etc.)
- Inquiry/Discovery
- Deliberations/Conversations/Socratic Seminars
- Issue/Problem-Based
- Document-Based Questioning/Primary Source
- Lecture (AP students more than regular)

⁸ Requests were sent to over 80 Marion County administrators.

There were several teachers interviewed whose students participated in *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* program and they strongly cited it as a best practice. *We the People* is a program offered through the Center for Civic Education, which promotes civic competence and responsibility in students by offering curriculum, teacher development and the opportunity for students to participate in simulated congressional hearing competitions. According to a report on the program:

“The Simulated Congressional Hearing provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and ideas while providing teachers an excellent means of assessing student learning. The entire class, working in cooperative teams, prepares and presents four minute statements before a panel of community representatives acting as a congressional committee. Students then answer follow-up questions posed by the committee members.”⁹

Another common theme among the high school teachers interviewed was that quite a few students come into high school government and U.S. History classes unacquainted with even basic knowledge of civics.

Teachers reported that student preparation depended a great deal on the feeder school that the student was coming from. In general, though, students are not well acquainted with basic subject matter. ***Notably, Randolph Cochran from Shortridge High School (an IPS Magnet school for law and public policy, no less) conducted a survey of incoming students in his government class. Only 10 out of the class of 130 could name the three branches of government.***

Best Practices

To better discern the state of civic education in Marion County, we conducted best practices research on civic education and then compared these established, effective classroom methods to the survey

Interviewees

Marion County Teachers:

- Randolph Cochran – Magnet Coordinator, Shortridge High School
- Barbara Burge – Indianapolis Public Schools Social Studies Facilitator
- Anne Cook – Christel House Academy (Charter) 5th grade teacher
- Andrew Smith – Scecina Memorial High School (Parochial) High School Government and Economics teacher
- Erin Bohn – Roncalli High School (Parochial) High School Government teacher
- Mark Worrell – Cathedral High School (Parochial) US History teacher
- Matthew Lo – Brebeuf (Parochial) US History & World History

Gilder Lehman Award Winners – (not in Marion County)

- Tom Haywood – Indian Creek Middle School (Public) – 8th grade Social Studies
- Connie Diaz – Sugar Creek Elementary (Public) – 4th grade Social Studies

Best Practices Teacher – (not in Marion County)

- Sara Sisco – Potters House Christian High School (Parochial) HS Civics and US History

⁹ <http://new.civiced.org/wtp-the-program/hearings/high-school>

responses. The best practice teachers indicated that certain instructional methods can combine to make for a powerful learning experience. These include: mock trials; simulations; discussing relevant issues; having students engage in defending their position with concern to a real issue; and having students participate in experiences outside of the classroom that allows them to put their citizenship into practice. Interestingly, the surveys suggest that a large number of teachers are not utilizing simulations consistently as an instructional method to teach civics— 47% of respondents reported either “Sometimes” or “Never” having students participate in role-playing and simulations (i.e. mock elections, debate or court case reenactment). Simulations can be an especially powerful way for students to use the knowledge they have learned in an applied fashion while teaching students important communication skills.

IPS Best Practice

Students at Shortridge High School may apply for a rigorous course taught by the IPS district adjudicator Judge Kelly Rota-Autry, who handles all discipline cases for IPS. In the class students take on all the roles you would find in a typical courtroom. Sixteen students are rotated through the different roles including: prosecution team, defense team, clerk, bailiff, judge, etc. This program then takes mild and low-level discipline cases from all over the district and—with approval from the student and their parents—will try the case in the student court held in Shortridge’s own moot courtroom. Students in the class then follow up on the contracts and decisions made in the court by serving as “probation” officers who track outcomes. In 2012, the student court heard fifteen cases.

Shortridge Magnet High School for Law and Public Policy opened in 1864.

It is the oldest free, public high school in the state of Indiana.

Another important best practice in civic education is to gear lessons toward relevant controversial issues of the day. A related practice makes connections between antecedents from the past with current trends and issues impacting life today. All of the best practice teachers interviewed report that they often connect lessons to issues that are relevant to students’ lives. When there is a degree of emotional investment in the lesson that comes from discussing or solving a controversial issue, students are much more apt to be engaged, connect to, and remember the concepts.

Randolph Cochran of Shortridge reflected the sentiment of the exemplar teachers when he said, “Push hands on experiences; look at issues that are relevant to them; help students learn to solve problems; become a real part of policy making and changing.” His colleagues across Marion County have room for improvement: 37% of survey respondents either “Sometimes” or “Never” include discussion on controversial issues in class.

The ability to discuss an issue in a civil manner by listening well and by using accurate evidence to back an argument is a skill that is crucial for students to develop. This muscle seems to be

working in Marion County: 87% of respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that students learn how to defend their opinion with civil discourse. There was a slight difference between parochial schools and public schools with concern to civil discourse: 100% of parochial school respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly agreed” that students learn how to defend their opinion with civil discourse compared to 70% of public school respondents.

Three other key features of building citizenship skills include:

- 1) Learning how to treat the environment with care. 100% of public school respondents either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that students learn how to act to protect the environment in their school. At the same time, only 40% of parochial school respondents either “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” that students learn how to act to protect the environment in their school.
- 2) Students should be allowed to participate in activities in the community wherein they can learn through direct experience what it means to be a responsible citizen. It was surprising then that 71% of parochial school respondents either “Sometimes” or “Never” have their students participate in events or activities in the community (service learning) compared to the 54% of public school respondents in the same categories.
- 3) Participation in both the political process and in events and activities that strengthen communities facilitates civic learning. Survey respondents and interviewees agreed that active participation is an important aspect of civic education. However, it does not seem to have become a practice that most Marion County teachers are able to integrate into the classroom experience: 57% of those surveyed either “Sometimes” or “Never” have students participate in events or activities in the community (service learning). Worse, 38% of public school respondents say that their students “Never” get to participate in events or activities in the community (service learning).

One survey respondent commented, “Students need to be taught what it means to be a good citizen. Schools are a perfect place to introduce this if it isn't being introduced at home. Schools are also a good place to practice being a good citizen.” Based on the survey, teachers understand there is high potential for effective learning to occur when students have an opportunity to participate in the life of the community in real ways. They also exhibited honesty in acknowledging they don't do it well, which is perhaps why it rated #1 in desired improvements.

Desired Improvements in Civics Education:

More opportunities for service learning	13
Additional training in subject matter knowledge	13
More instructional time allocated to civic education	12
Additional training in teaching methods:	12
More cooperation between teachers in different subject areas or grade levels	11
More opportunities for special projects	11
More emphasis on civic topics in standardized assessment	6
Better materials and textbooks	4
More materials and textbooks	2

Lessons Learned

The need for increased community engagement: Schools, teachers, parents and community organizations can partner together to provide students with quality opportunities to participate in service learning in which students can work alongside community members to make a real difference in the community. These opportunities need to be coupled with classroom instruction that integrates service learning experiences with an opportunity for reflection and for instruction on the public policy issues that are involved.

The need for professional development in civics education: It is evident that teachers are requesting and require additional training in civics content. Only seven out of thirty teachers had received specific training in professional development activities or training in a discipline related to civic education. Of those seven, two cited economics training and one cited technology opportunities; another received their training in a previous, non-teaching position.

The need for more time: The current trend in education is to allocate a significant amount of time to reading and math. Gilder Lehman award-winning elementary teacher Connie Diaz explained that teachers are under pressure to ensure that reading and math scores on standardized assessments are high. As a result, civic education tends to be deprioritized in favor of metric-conscious subjects. While those skills are certainly crucial to student development, teachers suggest that they would like to have more time allocated to civic education. In fact, public school teachers feel that the best way to improve civic education in their classrooms is to allocate more instructional time to it (seven out of thirteen identified increased time as a desired improvement.) Erin Bohn at Roncalli High School appreciates that government is a requirement at the high school level but wishes that it was offered for an entire year.

The need for enhanced teaching methods: Additional training and coaching in teaching methods that are conducive to civic education is crucial. Some important methods include simulations, discussion-based learning (Socratic seminars or the Harkness method), integrating civics topics into reading and writing objectives, inquiry based (discovery) learning, and problem-based learning. These methods, of course, are not new to the field, but have been established as effective ways of teaching. Noted psychologist, Jerome Bruner has been promoting similar methods since the early 1960s. All too often, teachers are frequently introduced to new methods of teaching without proper time and care allocated to their implementation. As a result, teachers are unable to use the methods in depth and lack proper feedback and coaching on the method. Research has shown that new programs or professional development activities must be implemented thoroughly over time to achieve a high impact in the school. (Reeves, 2010) Andrew Smith a teacher from Scecina Memorial High School said that schools should “stop playing with stuff, find something solid, research-based, and keep it for more than a year.”

Conclusions

Marion County has come a long way since the early 1900s when the city of Indianapolis' public elementary schools were touted as a national best practice in civic education. Today, civic education vies for the attention of both public and parochial institutions in an environment of ever increasing expectations and standards. The evidence of our survey indicates that the lack of extraordinary performance at the county level is more an issue of prioritization and preparation rather than a dearth of passion for the subject matter.

As school leaders and teachers consider how to improve civic education in their hallways and communities, they seem unified in believing that enhancing and integrating the subject matter is needed more than needing to justify why civic education matters. Survey respondents illustrated this point by citing areas of improvement. Parochial respondents indicated a need for more environmental stewardship and experiential learning while public schools need more partnerships with community-based organizations to establish service learning opportunities.

Across Marion County, there is an opportunity for communities and neighborhoods to engage their schools and the students in them. The experience that the county's students gain from volunteering and service work not only reinforces their classroom experience but gives them a deeper stake in the well-being of the places they call home. The results of this study, then, elicits a call for communities—schools, churches, businesses, government, and neighbors—to exemplify civic engagement and thus teach students through action what it means to be a citizen.

Appendix I: Quotes from survey comments

- I think it's very important in the development of a highly educated population who cares and contributes to our country... this is something we are lacking in America today.
- Civics is the basis for a democratic society. Without it, political leaders are free to hold unchecked power and act irresponsibly.
- Public schools are the great equalizer as we have many, MANY immigrant children in our school. One-third of our school students have English as their second language. Our teachers pass on to our students much information about our country and government and our society as the students transition and become part of the fabric of our community. I'd say the teaching of civics is extremely important.
- I think that it is fundamental to society; I think society believes it is no longer a fundamental.
- It is what prepares students to take part in our representative democracy. We ignore it at grave risk to society, and we are already seeing the results in social breakdown.
- This is what helps students care about current events and volunteerism.
- It must be considered one of the most important values in our society for our republic to sustain itself.

- Students need to be taught what it means to be a good citizen. Schools are a perfect place to introduce this if it isn't being introduced at home. Schools are also a good place to practice being a good citizen.
- It helps kids realize that we are not the only "culture" and learn about the wonders and lives of those from other or different cultures--it builds tolerance.
- I believe it is very important that students learn and understand their role as citizens in a democratic society. Citizenship means more than having ones name on a piece of paper....in part, it's taking an active role in determining who and how our government will operate, for us, now and in the future.
- In a word, very. It is fundamental to the continuance of the American system of liberty under the rule of law. However, I don't see how the general understanding of American civic society can get much worse. We have ignorant voters electing manipulative politicians, and schools generally teach from a position that the United States is a world problem. My school is better than most at fostering a positive attitude.

Appendix II: Interviewees regarding how to improve civic education

- Tom Haywood “I believe that school-wide civics initiatives that get students involved in the application of civics standards in a “real world” way is our only hope in directly enhancing civic education.”
- Ease up the pressure on reading/math scores – show teachers way to integrate civics instruction into reading.
- Work on skills in addition to content. Skills like: civil discourse; deliberation.
- Prove that one person can make a difference; utilize service learning hours.
- Showing students what an aware student looks like and needs to do.
- Requiring a whole year instead of one semester.
- Andrew Smith “Broad scale improvement is necessary. Not in the way of common core but states on their own need to improve. A national curriculum won’t address the deficiency. Instituting tougher teacher certification credentials. Stop playing with new curriculum and programs, find something solid and research based and keep it for more than one year.”
- Need more emphasis on civics – perhaps requiring a civics class to graduate. Work on getting young people more involved.
- Randolph Cochran “Push hands on experiences; look at issues that are relevant to them; help students learn to solve problems; become a real part of policy making and changing.”